

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for producing a saponified ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, which comprises saponifying an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer in an alcohol-based solvent in the presence of an alkali catalyst until its saponification degree is at least 98 mol%, wherein from 100 ppm to 15,000 ppm of water (based on the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer) is added to the alcohol-based solvent, and wherein

a first solution comprising an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer and an alcohol-based solvent and a second solution comprising an alkali catalyst and an alcohol-based solvent are introduced into a saponification reaction column through an upper portion thereof, and a vapor of an alcohol-based solvent is introduced into the saponification reaction column through a lower portion thereof.

Claim 2 (Canceled).

²
Claim ~~2~~ (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, ~~claim 2~~, wherein water is fed into the saponification reaction column with the second solution.

Claims 4-7 (Canceled).

³
Claim ~~8~~ (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the ethylene content in the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is from 20 mol % to 70 mol %.

Claim ~~9~~⁴ (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the alcohol in the alcohol-based solvent is one or more selected from the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, n-butanol, and t-butanol.

Claim ~~10~~⁵ (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the alkali catalyst is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, and alkaline metal alcoholate.

Claims 11-20 (Canceled).

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the content of the alcohol-based solvent relative to the amount of the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer is at most 325 % and the amount of the alkali catalyst is from 0.5 to 20 mole % with respect to the acetic acid ester component of the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer.

Claim ~~22~~⁶ (Currently Amended): The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~the water content is between~~ from 100 ppm to and 3000 rpm of water (based on the ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer) is added to the alcohol-based solvent.